

Staying ‘nimble’ the key to CTE programming

Offered since the 1970’s, CTE programs at the Career Technical Education Center at Portsmouth High School are thriving, according to Career Technical Education Director Diane Canada. Averaging approximately 200 students annually, Portsmouth will offer seven programs in school



FCCLA students who competed at national competition this month in California

year 2016-17, which include: Education & Teacher Training, Entrepreneurship, Culinary Arts, Construction Trades, Architecture & Engineering Design, Welding Technology and Automotive Technology.

Down one program from last year, Portsmouth will no longer offer Hospitality Management, however, as leadership elected to close it with enrollment numbers less than sufficient to justify its continuance. In the program, students spent one class period each week learning the different areas of hotel operations at the Sheraton Portsmouth Hotel. Such a closure, though, is not a

negative development, but rather the result of the generally “nimble” nature of CTE programming itself.

“In the ten years I have been director, I have had to make changes to programming to meet the needs of the community and the interests of the students,” said Canada. “I have closed programs, cut them to half time, and put some on hold to determine whether to rebuild or close. I have increased programs and added new ones as well. I am continually shifting to keep our programming relevant to our students.”

As for what influences enrollment numbers for any particular program, she cited many factors, including economics, demographics, and perceptions regarding up and coming careers.

“Portsmouth is an affluent community where the vast majority of our students go on to four-year colleges,” she added.

Looking ahead

In looking to the next academic school year, Canada expressed enthusiasm regarding the direction of their CTE programs, including Entrepreneurship, which was just granted two-year approval from the NHDOE Career Development Bureau.

“I have two teachers for this one program and all classes are filled,” she said. “These students compete in the UNH BizGen competition as well as in their own in-house business plan competition that is fully supported by the Seacoast Rotary Club.”

Education & Teacher Training is another program that tends to attract many students, who become extremely active in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, a nonprofit national career and technical student organization program. Canada said these same students also intend to become quite active in Educators Rising, which provides young people with hands-on teaching experience, and help them develop the skills needed to become successful educators.

“Culinary Arts is also very popular in this restaurant town,” she said. “Our students compete very successfully at state and national levels. One student just returned from his second national competition in SkillsUSA.

In addition to expanding the footprint of current CTE programming, Canada said they are considering two new program areas.

“We are working very closely with Great Bay Community College to bring about a Computer Science Pathway,” she said. “This coming year, we will offer two courses that will be taught by GBCC faculty here in the high school as well as two courses offered in our blended learning lab through eStart. I am also partnering with a local nursing home, the Edgewood Centre, to offer an LNA Certification class. I am hoping to eventually offer more healthcare courses... This is an exciting time for our program and CTE statewide.”